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# Report of the Secretary-General on the situation in the Central African Republic

## I. Introduction

1. The present report is submitted pursuant to Security Council resolution 2149 (2014), by which the Council established the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA) until 30 April and requested me to report to the Council every four months starting on 1 August 2014. The report provides an update on the situation in the Central African Republic since my last report of 28 November 2014 (S/2014/857). It also provides an update on the implementation of the mandate of MINUSCA and recommendations for the Security Council's consideration in advance of the expiry of the mandate of MINUSCA on 30 April.

## II. Major developments

### A. Security, human rights and humanitarian developments

2. While there was a continued relative improvement in the security situation in the Central African Republic, many parts of the country remained highly volatile. High rates of criminality and clashes involving anti-Balaka and ex-Séléka elements continued, particularly in the central part of the country. The period under review also saw heightened tensions and violence against civilians related to the seasonal migration of Fulani (Peuhl) cattle herders. Illicit activities aimed mostly at controlling the country's natural resources and territory increased in various parts of the country. Enclaves of vulnerable populations, particularly Muslim communities, remained under direct threat despite increased protection and assistance efforts by humanitarian actors and the international forces including MINUSCA, the French Operation Sangaris and the European Union Force in the Central African Republic. Throughout the country, the dire humanitarian situation continued to affect 2.7 million people who rely on international assistance, representing more than half of the population.

3. The human rights situation remained grave, with numerous reports of violations and abuses, including killings, looting and destruction of property, violations of physical integrity, and restrictions on freedom of movement. On 15 January, the Commission of Inquiry on the Central African Republic, established

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pursuant to Security Council resolution 2127 (2013), issued its final report. The Commission concluded that the main parties to the conflict — the Central African armed forces (FACA), ex-Séléka and anti-Balaka — perpetrated systematic violations of international human rights and humanitarian law since 1 January 2013, amounting to war crimes and crimes against humanity, including, in the case of the anti-Balaka, ethnic cleansing.

4. In Bangui, anti-Balaka factions continued to pose the principal security threat. The persistent threat posed by some 2,000 ex-Séléka combatants and their families who remain regrouped in three military camps known as RDOT, Béal and BSS, with access to large stocks of unsecured ordnance and ammunition, as well as large scale criminal activities by other armed elements, including an increased incidence of carjacking, also continued to put the capital at risk of further instability.

5. MINUSCA arrested a prominent anti-Balaka leader, Rodrigue Nagibona, also known as Andilo, on 17 January. The arrest triggered several reprisals in Bangui by anti-Balaka groups: the kidnapping of a French humanitarian worker on 19 January who was later released on 23 January; the kidnapping of an international MINUSCA staff member on 20 January, who was released the same day; and, the abduction of the Central African Minister of Youth and Sport, Armel Sayo, on 25 January. Minister Sayo was released on 10 February.

6. Outside Bangui, armed groups continued to assert control in different parts of the country with anti-Balaka factions dominating the west, rival ex-Séléka groups in control of areas in the north and east, and clashes between and among the two engaging the international forces in the centre of the country. The country also faced continued threats from other armed groups such as the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA), Revolution and Justice and the Democratic Front of the Central African People. The unconfirmed reports regarding the presence of Boko Haram elements in the border area with Cameroon enhanced the threat of a possible spillover of Boko Haram activities from the Lake Chad Basin region into the Central African Republic. Many armed groups continued to levy illegal taxes on the population and oversee illicit mining activities.

7. In the west, a number of areas were under regular threat from criminal activities attributed mainly to anti-Balaka factions. Inter-communal tensions in these areas were associated with the presence of Muslim community enclaves and clashes linked to the seasonal migration of Fulani (Peuhl) cattle herders. On 4 December 2014, a group of Fulani reportedly attacked Bondiba in Nana-Mambéré prefecture and burned down 30 houses. Similar confrontations reportedly took place in the Batangafo and Bouca areas in Ouham prefecture, leading to the displacement of some 10,000 civilians. The security and humanitarian situations remained critical in and around Muslim community enclaves, notably Berberati, Boda, Carnot, PK5 in Bangui and Yaloké. Following operations by MINUSCA at the end of December 2014 in Carnot and Nola, local anti-Balaka leaders were arrested and their groups weakened.

8. In the centre and east, ex-Séléka factions vied for control of towns and resources. The Front Populaire pour la Renaissance de la Centrafrique (FPRC), led by Noureddine Adam and based in Kaga Bandoro, spread its influence to Bria under the military command of Arda Hackouma, pushing out the Rassemblement Patriotique pour le renouveau de la Centrafrique (RPRC) led by Zacharia Damane. The Union pour la Paix en Centrafrique (UPC), a Peuhl-based group in Bambari led

by Ali Darassa, increased its criminal activity during the reporting period while engaging in skirmishes with anti-Balaka groups and ex-Seleka FPRC and RPRC factions, mainly over the protection of economic interests.

9. In December 2014, clashes between Fulani cattle herders and anti-Balaka elements reportedly took place in Kouango in Ouaka prefecture, prompting an estimated 20,000 civilians to flee to the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Further east, following his surrender on 6 January in the Central African Republic, Dominic Ongwen, a senior LRA commander, was transferred to the International Criminal Court in The Hague on 20 January with the support of MINUSCA and other partners. LRA attacks on civilians, however, continued in the south-eastern part of the country.

10. On 10 February, MINUSCA and Sangaris forces launched an operation in Bria, Haute Kotto, that successfully expelled armed ex-Seleka elements from all administrative buildings under their occupation. Six ex-Seleka elements were killed during the operation, several were wounded and at least 16 others were detained. The following day, MINUSCA and Sangaris forces facilitated the deployment of 30 national gendarmes to Bria alongside a joint visit by Prime Minister Mahamat Kamoun to reassure the local population that State authority would rapidly be restored.

11. On 15 March, the European Union Force in the Central African Republic completed its mandate and the withdrawal of 750 uniformed personnel. On 16 March, the European Union Military Advisory Mission became operational with the aim of supporting the Central African authorities in the area of security sector reform, particularly with respect to the strategic restructuring of the Central African armed forces.

12. The humanitarian situation deteriorated, with new displacements observed in the central and eastern part of the country. Over 50,000 people were displaced since the beginning of the year, particularly in the areas of Bambari, Batangafo and Kaga Bandoro, bringing the total number of displaced inside the country up to some 436,000. Insecurity limited the ability to provide humanitarian assistance to the threatened populations, with an increased number of kidnappings reported since the beginning of the year. At the same time, the total number of Central African refugees in neighbouring countries also increased to above 425,000. The 2015 humanitarian response plan remained underfunded and urgently requires $612 million.

13. Some 500 Fulani (Peuhl) remained stranded in Yaloké following anti-Balaka attacks against them; 43 Fulani in Yaloke have died since their arrival in April 2014. Notwithstanding some progress on family reunification and enhanced protection efforts by MINUSCA and humanitarian partners, local authorities continued to prevent relocation in violation of international human rights and humanitarian law, legally binding principles on internal displacement, and Central African law.

## B. Political developments and the peace process

14. On 22 December 2014, the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) Mediator for the crisis in the Central African Republic, President of the Republic of Congo, Denis Sassou Nguesso, formally agreed to extend the country's

transition until August at the request of the Transitional Authorities. On 26 December 2014, Prime Minister Mahamat Kamoun announced a revised calendar for the electoral process, which foresaw a constitutional referendum in May and legislative and presidential elections in July and August.

15. On 16 January, the Office of the Head of State of the Transition announced limited changes to the composition of the government. Five ministers changed portfolios and four ministers were removed. The two highest-ranking members of the cabinet, Marie-Noelle Koyara and Aristide Sokambi, assumed the new roles of Minister of Defence and Minister of Justice, respectively.

16. On 23 January, Catherine Samba-Panza addressed the nation to mark the end of her first year as Head of State of the Transition. Ms. Samba-Panza cited criticism by political stakeholders, destabilization attempts and control of territory by armed groups as impediments to the government efforts to carry out the transition road map. She called on all political actors and civil society to remain fully engaged in normalizing the situation in the country.

17. On 17 February, the National Transitional Council adopted an initial draft of the revised constitution, amending it to include the establishment of a Senate. The National Transitional Council deferred deliberation on the electoral code and the draft law on the establishment of the Special Criminal Court.

18. On 16 March, the International Contact Group on the Central African Republic met in Brazzaville under the co-chairmanship of the African Union and the Republic of Congo. The meeting demonstrated continuing international support to the transition process and recognized progress made by the Transitional Authorities to advance the political process, but did not result in new pledges to bridge significant gaps in funding for the electoral process or to support the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration process. Participants urged the Transitional Authorities to accelerate election preparations, include a review of the legal framework in order to identify options to simplify the process and respect the eligibility clause in the Constitutional Charter that prohibits high-level transitional government officials from standing for office. The final communiqué reiterated the timeline for the transition with the end date of 15 August.

**Follow-up to the Cessation of Hostilities Agreement, Local Popular Consultations and the Bangui Forum**

19. The Cessation of Hostilities Agreement, signed on 23 July 2014 in Brazzaville under the auspices of President Sassou Nguesso in his role as Mediator, initiated a political process in the Central African Republic, including nationwide popular consultations and a Bangui Forum meeting on reconciliation, among political stakeholders and armed groups to end violence and return stability to the country. However, the Cessation of Hostilities implementation mechanisms, including the Follow-up Commission and the Technical Committee, have not adequately monitored or prevented frequent violations of the agreement. On 16 January and 19 February, respectively, the Follow-up Commission and the Technical Committee met to review their work during 2014 and discuss a possible reorganization.

20. The local popular consultations began across the country in January. Despite significant logistical and security challenges, particularly in ex-Séléka controlled areas, the local consultations were successfully completed with MINUSCA support

in 64 locations out of 71 planned. They took place in all 16 prefectures, Bangui's 8 districts and internally displaced persons camps, and with refugee and diaspora communities in Cameroon, Chad and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Approximately 4,000 Central Africans participated in the local consultations, with 35 to 40 per cent women and 30 per cent youth participation.

21. In preparation for the Bangui Forum, its Preparatory Commission began work on 19 January. Led by Commission President Beatrice Epaye, a respected former minister, civil society leader and current member of the National Transitional Council, the Commission established four thematic working groups in the areas of peace and security, justice and reconciliation, governance and development. A team of international and national experts support the work of the Commission, including on specific thematic areas, which will also draw on the results of the local consultations.

**External mediation initiatives in Nairobi and Rome**

22. In December 2014, informal discussions initiated at the request of the Mediator, President Sassou Nguesso, by the Government of Kenya in Nairobi led to the reported initialling of agreements involving former Head of State of the Transition Michel Djotodia and former President François Bozize. On 29 January, the Head of State of the Transition issued a communiqué rejecting the Nairobi discussions and calling on the Mediator to maintain support for the ongoing political process. On 31 January, a meeting of the ECCAS Heads of State and Government, held on the margins of the African Union Summit in Addis Ababa issued a communiqué underlining that any agreement signed outside the framework of the Brazzaville process would be considered null and void.

23. On 27 February, a group of leading Central African Republic politicians travelled to Rome under the auspices of the Community of Sant'Egidio and negotiated an appeal addressed to Central Africans and the international community. The document reiterates the commitment of its signatories to the Brazzaville process, including the Bangui Forum. The signatories called for the international community's financial support to the electoral process and for all citizens to respect the results of the elections.

## C. Preparations for the elections

24. The National Electoral Authority established 88 out of 142 local branch offices and completed the assessment of 70 out of an estimated 3,300 polling sites. On 11 March, agreements were signed with the European Union on the disbursement of an initial instalment of $8 million in support of the elections. The contribution, combined with those from the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and France, as well as the pledge of $500,000 from the African Union, will facilitate the launch of the voter registration process.

25. On 27 December 2014, an amended electoral law was adopted combining the presidential and legislative elections and promoting non-biometric voter registration. The law has yet to be promulgated, owing to a decision on 16 January by the Constitutional Court regarding the harmonization of the provisions of the electoral code and the participation of internally displaced population and refugees in the process.

26. On 9 February, during a meeting involving the National Electoral Authority, other national electoral stakeholders and international partners, the Authority briefed participants on the constraints and challenges in the electoral process and called for the disbursement of pledges by partners and greater national ownership. Representatives of some political parties raised concerns about the security situation, the eligibility criteria and the high number of potential candidates.

### D. Socioeconomic developments

27. The economy of the Central African Republic in 2014 remained stagnant with a growth rate of 1 per cent. The Transitional Authorities, with the assistance of the United Nations and international partners, put in place mechanisms to ensure the sustainability of public financial management in accordance with agreements reached with the International Monetary Fund. These include a public treasury monitoring committee presided over by the Prime Minister; a national commission to monitor the use of national resources in collaboration with international partners to ensure transparency in the allocation of the national budget; and, a steering committee, chaired by the Minister of Finance, to oversee the verification and control of the civil service payroll, which will work in collaboration with UNDP and the World Bank.

28. The implementation of structural adjustment programmes to improve income receipts and better management of expenses are yet to achieve concrete results. Inflation reached 15.3 per cent in 2014, owing to the rise in food prices. As a result, the food security situation deteriorated. Agricultural programmes, funded by international partners, sustained approximately 111,750 households in 2014. However, in 2014 internal revenue receipts totalled $92 million against a projected $103 million, although a 70 per cent increase is projected for 2015.

## III. Implementation of the mandate of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic

### A. Support to the political process

29. Through the good offices of my Special Representative in the Central African Republic, Babacar Gaye, along with my Special Representative for Central Africa, Abdoulaye Bathily, the United Nations, in coordination with other key international partners, worked closely with the signatories of the Cessation of Hostilities Agreement to encourage their commitment to the Brazzaville process. In his capacity as United Nations representative in the international mediation team, Special Representative Bathily continued to work closely with African Union representative Soumeylou Boubèye Maïga in supporting and providing advice to President Sassou Nguesso. Special Representative Bathily emphasized the importance of refocusing the political process around the Brazzaville process at the regional and national levels. MINUSCA continued to provide secretariat support to regular weekly meetings with international partners, including France, the Republic of Congo, the United States of America, ECCAS, the Mediator's team, MINUSCA, the World Bank and the European Union, collectively known as the Group of 8 or

G-8. The G-8 conducted regular joint visits with the Transitional Authorities to various prefectures to assess the situation and encourage all parties to support the local consultations and abide by the Cessation of Hostilities Agreement.

30. MINUSCA and the United Nations country team played a vital role in supporting the Transitional Authorities to hold the local popular consultations. Prior to launching the process, from 14 to 16 January, MINUSCA and UNDP, in partnership with the Ministry of Reconciliation, held training workshops for the 28 facilitation teams in Bangui. MINUSCA, with support of the international forces, also provided significant logistical and security support for the conduct of the consultations throughout the country.

31. In preparation for the Bangui Forum and at the request of the Preparatory Commission, MINUSCA provided advice and coordinated support to the Commission in close collaboration with ECCAS, the Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue and other organizations active in reconciliation and dialogue support initiatives in the Central African Republic. MINUSCA and UNDP also provided technical support to the thematic groups established by the Commission, including a substantive briefing organized at the request of the Commission on 27 February on key themes for the Forum, as well as on planning of cross-sectoral and public awareness activities for the Forum.

32. With support from the Peacebuilding Fund, UNDP and the International Organization for Migration, in close coordination with MINUSCA, continued to carry out projects supporting reconciliation initiatives, including the Bangui Forum and local consultations, the implementation of the National Reconciliation Strategy and the voluntary relocation of the ex-Séléka elements from their camps in Bangui to their communities of origin or choice. To date, over 850 ex-Séléka elements in the RDOT, BSS and Beal camps in Bangui have been relocated to the east. MINUSCA, in close coordination with the Transitional Authorities and the United Nations country team, also initiated labour-intensive income generating projects for youths at risk in communities affected by armed groups. Pilot projects began in Bambari, Bouar, Bria, and Kaga Bandoro involving the employment of youth from armed groups and local communities in non-skilled work to rehabilitate local infrastructure.

## B. Support to the preparations for the elections

33. Providing support to the electoral process remained a high priority for MINUSCA and UNDP. In close coordination with national stakeholders, MINUSCA and UNDP, with support from the Departments of Peacekeeping Operations and Field Support, developed a multi-disciplinary operational plan and concept of operations to support the Transitional Authorities on the electoral process.

34. The plan outlines efforts in relation to the creation of a conducive environment for the elections, public awareness and sensitization, technical assistance, monitoring, and capacity-building. It also outlines detailed logistics planning in relation to the voter registration process, voting, and post-electoral support to the National Electoral Authority and the national internal security forces. The plan further includes measures aimed at ensuring the participation of women, refugees, and internally displaced persons. In this connection, MINUSCA established an ad hoc committee and organized a symposium to increase awareness among national

actors on women's candidacies and effective participation in the Bangui Forum and the elections.

35. The One United Nations Elections Task Force, chaired by MINUSCA and composed of all relevant components of MINUSCA and the United Nations country team, continued to meet regularly to coordinate the provision of integrated electoral support to the Transitional Authorities. UNDP approved an electoral support project in the amount of $43,483,745 and established a basket fund for international partners' contributions. The Fund Steering Committee held its first meeting on 9 February to discuss funding for the electoral process. As at February 2015, the funding gap of the UNDP project amounted to approximately 38 per cent or $16,608,745.

## C. Protection of civilians

36. In accordance with the MINUSCA protection of civilians strategy, the MINUSCA integrated protection of civilians coordination mechanisms have continued to operate on a weekly basis at the strategic, operational and tactical levels and include the Senior Humanitarian Coordinator and country representatives from the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and the United Nations Children's Fund. Senior Management Groups on Protection are now in place in Bangui, Bouar, Bria and Kaga Bandoro, which enable joint threat assessments and coordinated response planning with humanitarian partners.

37. In the context of the revision of MINUSCA concepts of operations, MINUSCA deployment plans were recalibrated in order to ensure the continued presence of uniformed personnel in priority protection areas, while maintaining quick reaction forces to prevent and respond to protection threats and temporary operating bases in places such as in PK5 or Boye Rabe in Bangui. Midterm deployment and contingency protection plans also take into account risks to civilians that may result from the progressive departure of other international forces, particularly in Bangui.

38. The establishment of community-based early warning analysis and rapid-response tools is ongoing. Joint protection missions were deployed to initiate the development of community-level protection plans in priority areas such as Baoro, Berberati, Bozum and Kuango. In addition, 24 Community Liaison Assistants were under recruitment to support the MINUSCA military components on engagement with communities, humanitarian actors and local authorities. Induction training for MINUSCA civilian and uniformed personnel on the protection of civilians was conducted regularly in Bangui, including to support the establishment of standard alert and rapid-response processes.

39. MINUSCA continued to regularly update its forward-looking threat assessment to identify areas where preventative or responsive action was required to protect civilians. Over the reporting period, specific action was initiated in Bangui, Batangafo, Kaga Bandoro, Mbres and the Kouango — Bambari — Bangassou triangle.

## D. Promotion and protection of human rights

40. The human rights situation remained of serious concern. MINUSCA documented cases of extra-judicial killings, arbitrary arrest and detention, harassment, intimidation, abduction, physical assault, looting and destruction of property as well as sexual violence against internally displaced people and other civilians committed mostly by ex-Seleka and anti-Balaka elements. Victims of human rights violations or abuses, mainly civilians, continued to face serious challenges relating to access to justice. In some areas under their control, armed elements took on police and gendarmerie roles and practiced "popular justice", sometimes leading to acts of torture or even death of individuals accused of witchcraft. During the reporting period, MINUSCA investigated 85 new incidents of human rights violations that affected 142 persons committed mainly by ex-Seleka and anti-Balaka elements, 39 of which were verified and confirmed.

41. From 3 to 14 February, the Independent Expert on the situation of human rights in the Central African Republic conducted her fourth mission to the country. The Independent Expert called for continued efforts to fight impunity, and expressed concern regarding the rights of minorities and internally displaced persons, notably Muslim communities, as well as about the Christian population under threat in Muslim populated areas or in areas controlled by ex-Seleka elements.

42. MINUSCA conducted induction training for MINUSCA personnel and trained personnel from 50 Central African human rights organizations on human rights monitoring, investigation and reporting. On 12 and 13 December 2014, MINUSCA and the Ministry of National Reconciliation, Dialogue and the Promotion of Civic Culture held a joint workshop on human rights, including transitional justice, for representatives of the transitional government, civil society organizations, opinion leaders, members of the Bangui Bar Association and other national institutions. Participants exchanged views on mechanisms that could be established aimed at ensuring justice, truth, reparations and non-recurrence of violations.

## E. Child protection

43. Despite a slight decline in the number of reported child rights' violations committed by the parties to the conflict, children have continued to be victims of abuses committed by armed elements of the ex-Seleka and anti-Balaka and LRA. On 7 February, 17 children were reportedly abducted together with adults by armed Sudanese poachers, near Mbres, Nana Grebizi.

44. The military leader of one of the factions of the ex-Seleka, UPC, Ali Darassa, issued an order prohibiting the recruitment and use of child soldiers, which resulted in the initial separation, on 27 November 2014, of 46 boys aged 12 to 16 years from an ex-Seleka group in Bambari. The children have since been reunified with their families. In preparation for the Bangui Forum, youth in various parts of the country participated in the local consultation process. MINUSCA and UNICEF provided support to the holding of a children's forum on 12 and 13 March, prior to the Bangui Forum, with the aim of ensuring that children's concerns are part of the national dialogue.

## F. Conflict-related sexual violence

45. Through its working group on conflict-related sexual violence and the monitoring, analysis and reporting arrangements in the Central African Republic, MINUSCA supported the Transitional Authorities to develop a national strategy for monitoring, investigating and reporting on conflict-related sexual violence and providing assistance to survivors. On 8 January, the Head of State of the Transition issued a decree for the creation of a national police and gendarmerie unit to fight sexual violence. MINUSCA provided support to the unit to build its capacity to respond to alerts, reports, threats and ongoing incidents of sexual violence.

## G. Extension of State authority

46. MINUSCA, in cooperation with the United Nations country team, took decisive steps to restore and extend State authority beyond Bangui. The Ministry of Territorial Administration, MINUSCA, UNDP, France and the European Union initiated a joint effort to develop a national strategy and a short-term action plan in support of the deployment of State authorities to provide basic services in the areas of security, basic rehabilitation, including the repair of administrative buildings, public service delivery and community dialogue. From 13 to 25 November 2014, the Peacebuilding Support Office, UNDP, the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and the World Bank undertook a joint mission to the Central African Republic and agreed to increase collaboration in support of the extension of State authority in the country. The United Nations country team has also taken steps to mainstream human security and encourage the transitional government to include human security in its policies and actions. With the exception of Vakaga and Bamingui-Bangoran prefectures, the Prefects returned to all other 14 prefectures. In addition, 50 of 71 Sub-Prefects have resumed their functions.

## H. Justice and the rule of law

47. MINUSCA and UNDP, working jointly under the Global Focal Point arrangement for police, justice and corrections, provided support to the Ministry of Justice in developing a national strategy to gradually reopen courts and detention facilities and deploy national magistrates and prison personnel outside Bangui in places where the security situation has improved. Several courts resumed operations in Bangui and some magistrates were deployed to 12 of a total of 28 courts throughout the country. MINUSCA and the United Nations country team also provided support and coordinated international assistance for the organization of criminal court sessions in Bangui, the first to be held in the Central African Republic since 2010.

48. MINUSCA deployed all 20 authorized United Nations corrections officers and additional MINUSCA staff in Bangui to support the reform of the national prison system. In terms of prison management, search and control methods and the treatment of juveniles improved somewhat following a series of training courses provided by MINUSCA on security and respect for prisoners' rights to nearly 100 penitentiary and military personnel working in prisons. MINUSCA also provided support to reinforce the security and general conditions in the Bimbo and Ngaragba prisons and secured funding for the rehabilitation of the Camp de Roux

maximum security centre in Bangui. Once completed, this facility will be suitable for the detention of those accused of the most serious crimes.

## I. Implementation of urgent temporary measures and support to the establishment of the Special Criminal Court

49. In accordance with paragraph 40 of resolution 2149 (2014), MINUSCA, in support of the Transitional Authorities and in coordination with the international forces, arrested a total of 283 suspects, among whom 24 have allegedly committed serious crimes (for example, murder, rape, war crimes and crimes against humanity). All of these individuals were handed over to national police or gendarmerie, and about 80 of them have been detained in the Bangui Central Prison in Ngaragba. MINUSCA advocated for legal proceedings against the individuals arrested to begin in accordance with international standards and provided advice to national magistrates examining the most serious crimes. The overcrowding of the Bangui Central Prison and the severe lack of operating correction facilities outside of Bangui was one of the main challenges faced by the Transitional Authorities and MINUSCA in the implementation of urgent temporary measures.

50. The draft law establishing a national Special Criminal Court with competence over crimes against humanity, war crimes and genocide was approved by the Council of Ministers on 6 February and submitted to the National Transitional Council. The Council law commission began consideration of the draft law on 16 March during the Council's ordinary session, which began on 2 March. This version of the draft law largely complies with the memorandum of intent of August 2014 signed between MINUSCA and the Transitional Authorities, in particular by excluding the application of the death penalty.

## J. Disarmament, demobilization and reintegration

51. MINUSCA began preparatory planning for a national disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programme. Eligibility criteria and a mapping of armed groups were presented to the National Committee on Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration and Security Sector Reform chaired by the Prime Minister. Proposals on the structure and format of the national disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programme were also presented to national and international counterparts for discussion. In addition, MINUSCA started to engage with potential partners for the reintegration phase. For those not eligible to participate in the national disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programme, MINUSCA is developing community violence reduction projects to be implemented in high-risk areas and targeting youth at risk. These projects will be a vital contribution to efforts to absorb armed elements, which are not part of traditionally structured armed movements.

## K. Security sector reform and vetting

52. MINUSCA enhanced its efforts in the area of security sector reform and vetting. It supported the National Committee on Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration and Security Sector Reform and the security sector reform technical

committee in preparing strategic principles for the reform of the Central African armed forces and principles for the integration of ex-combatants into the security and defence forces, including in advance of discussions on this issue in the context of the Bangui Forum. In addition, MINUSCA continued to provide advice to the national authorities on the establishment of a reconstituted battalion of the Central African armed forces for the provision of static protection and the development of selection criteria for its personnel in line with international humanitarian law and human rights standards and with the aim of putting in place a professional, representative and balanced army. As at the end of February, 615 Central African armed forces personnel had been verified through this process. On 25 February, the Head of State of the Transition, in the presence of my Special Representative for the Central African Republic, officially reinstated the first unit of the first Territorial Infantry Battalion.

## L. Coordination of international assistance

53. MINUSCA and the United Nations country team continued to support the Transitional Authorities in the implementation of the New Deal programme for the country's peacebuilding and rehabilitation efforts. On 23 February, in Yaoundé, a meeting of the International Partners' Forum organized in coordination with the Transitional Authorities and attended by several Central African Republic Ministers and the President of the National Electoral Authority discussed preparations for the elections and financing gaps. MINUSCA and the United Nations country team continued to support the development of a common aid management and tracking system.

## M. Assisting the Panel of Experts on the Central African Republic and monitoring the implementation of Security Council resolution 2196 (2015)

54. In cooperation with the Panel of Experts, MINUSCA initiated the collection of data on the origin and status of small arms and light weapons, and developed procedures for handling seized weapons. To date, a total of 1,829 weapons have been individually checked and safely stored. MINUSCA continued to share information with the Panel of Experts and provided security support during inspections of arms or related materials. MINUSCA also sought to enhance its capacity for the prevention of transnational crimes, including the illicit transfers of weapons, and began providing strategic advice to the Transitional Authorities on the need to prevent armed groups from profiting from the illicit exploitation of natural resources.

## N. Weapons and ammunitions management

55. The MINUSCA weapons and explosive hazard management section identified and stored a total of 2,494 weapons found in former military camps and others seized in ground operations, and assessed 4.1 tons of ammunition and weapons in Camp Béal and Camp RDOT for future relocation or destruction. MINUSCA assessed 27 stockpile locations, among them 19 police and gendarmerie stations, in

addition to Bangui's main prison. In Camp Kassai in Bangui, a temporary ammunition depot for storing 80 tons of ammunition away from the population was under construction, as endorsed by the Minister of Defence, as well as a permanent armoury for small calibre ammunition. MINUSCA completed weapons and ammunition management field visits in three locations outside of Bangui, resulting in the assessment of national defence and security forces locations. MINUSCA also organized risk education "training of trainers" sessions for 29 individuals representing five local and international humanitarian organizations.

### O. Safety and security of United Nations staff

56. United Nations personnel and other humanitarian personnel faced increasing security threats related to armed conflict and criminality throughout the country, including a surge of hostage-taking by anti-Balaka armed elements in Bangui and other parts of the country. The number of serious security incidents involving United Nations personnel totaled 22 incidents from December 2014 to March 2015. On 20 January, a female MINUSCA staff member was taken from a marked United Nations vehicle and kidnapped on her way to work; she was released unharmed the same day. The overall security threat levels for United Nations civilian personnel remained substantial in various parts of the country where armed groups were present.

## IV. Update on the deployment of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic

57. As at early March, some 8,216 military troops, or approximately 82 per cent of the MINUSCA total authorized military strength of 10,000 troops, and 1,205 police, or approximately 67 per cent of the total authorized police strength of 1,800, were deployed. Approximately 75 per cent (328) of the 440 staff officers and military observers, and more than 50 per cent (204) of the 400 individual police officers were also deployed. These figures include the deployment of 9 out of 10 infantry battalions and the ongoing deployment of necessary enablers for the military component, as well as 7 fully deployed and 2 advanced parties of 10 formed police units. Former MISCA troop- and police-contributing countries have continued to face delays to upgrade the contingent-owned equipment to United Nations standards. It is anticipated that MINUSCA will reach full operational capability with 90 per cent of its authorized strength deployed by April, including 10 infantry battalions and 9 formed police units, with the exception of those units and air assets for which pledges have yet to be received or which have not been made available by troop- and police-contributing countries.

58. The military enabling units were operational, including two of the three level II medical facilities, one transport company, one of two military helicopter units, one of three signals units and three engineering units. To ensure effective operational capacity, MINUSCA air assets included three commercial rotary wing and two fixed-wing aircraft operating internal routes in the mission area. To enhance strategic communications, MINUSCA expanded the reach of Radio Guira from Bangui including in Bambari, Bria and Kaga Bandoro.

59. In December 2014, 90 per cent of MINUSCA authorized civilian personnel were under recruitment. An additional 666 civilian personnel and 72 additional electoral posts were authorized, respectively, in January and February 2015, bringing the total civilian authorized personnel to 1,546. As at 31 March, approximately 36 per cent of all MINUSCA authorized posts were filled, with an additional 15 per cent under recruitment. Women comprise 30 per cent of the current strength of civilian personnel, with 26 per cent at mid-management and senior levels.

## V. Review of the Mission, military, police and support concepts

60. In my letter addressed to the President of the Security Council dated 29 January (S/2015/85), I submitted a formal request for the authorization of an increase of 750 military personnel and 280 police personnel for MINUSCA, in order to enable the deployment of an additional infantry battalion and two formed police units, as well as 20 corrections officers. Subsequently, the Department of Peacekeeping Operations dispatched a multidisciplinary review team to the Central African Republic from 2 to 17 February, to support MINUSCA to revise its mission concept, as well as to review the military and police concept of operations and the support concept.

61. In its findings, the review team noted that while the security situation in Bangui has improved, MINUSCA deployed an additional infantry battalion to secure Bangui and partly committed its Force reserve battalion of 450 troops following the violence in the capital in October 2014. The review team noted that the threats in Bangui had also spread to the immediate vicinity of the city, necessitating the extension of the operational area of the Bangui Task Force. With the current authorized strength of uniformed personnel, the review team concluded that the Task Force cannot adequately cover the outlying areas of Bangui while maintaining its planned deployment throughout the country. The importance of securing Bangui in the coming months was such that, without an additional battalion, MINUSCA would be obliged to revise its previously planned deployment, which would result in a vacuum in the northeast. This in turn would entail significant risks to support the provision of security in the context of the elections and to the extension of State authority. The review team also found a need for an increase of 40 military staff officers and military observers within the authorized troop ceiling, bringing the total number to 480.

62. Regarding police, the team confirmed that an increase in 280 police personnel — or the equivalent of two formed police units — was needed, as two formed police units were currently dedicated to the provision of protection and support to senior Central African Republic officials and key installations. The review team noted further that MINUSCA police would be stretched to the limit in performing election-related tasks and in supporting internal security forces, rule of law activities, the implementation of urgent temporary measures and support to the Special Criminal Court, and the extension of State authority beyond Bangui, within existing capabilities.

63. A key planning principle underpinning the deployment of uniformed personnel in MINUSCA, which was also validated by the team, is that as security conditions improve and security sector reform and disarmament, demobilization and

reintegration and community violence reduction processes progress, the requirement for police personnel will increase, while the requirement for military personnel should decrease. The findings of the review team were reflected in draft revisions of the Mission Concept and military, police and support concepts of operations. The findings also informed the development of the operational plan in support of the elections.

## VI. Observations

64. Despite a continued relative improvement, the security situation in the Central African Republic remains volatile and its people subject to high levels of violence from armed groups, heightened criminality, and inter-community conflicts that remain ethnically and religiously charged. The increasingly blurred lines between criminal and politically instigated acts of violence pose a constant threat to the civilian population and undermine efforts to ensure that the transition remains on track. I remain deeply concerned about the continued serious human rights violations and abuses, including acts of sexual- and gender-based violence, perpetrated against civilians with impunity. I strongly urge all parties to recommit to and implement the 23 July 2014 Cessation of Hostilities Agreement and to take concrete steps, with the support of the international community, to ensure the protection of civilians and to create the conditions for displaced persons to return to their homes.

65. The transition is at a critical stage. The Central African Republic and its citizens have achieved an important milestone with the completion of the local popular consultation process conducted throughout the country, with the support of MINUSCA. I encourage all national stakeholders, with the support of regional and international partners, to seize the opportunity of the Bangui Forum to advance peace and stability and ensure that the outcomes of the local consultations and the Forum yield agreement and national consensus on key issues at the heart of the crisis. These include political and economic governance; the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration or repatriation of members of armed groups and children among their ranks; security sector reform, including the reconstitution of the Central African armed forces and security services; justice and the fight against impunity; and, reconciliation, including formal and transitional justice mechanisms. The integration of women's perspectives and priorities in all these areas will be important to secure a long-lasting and sustainable peace.

66. The Bangui Forum and inclusive credible elections will be key events towards the successful conclusion of the transition. It is critical to avoid parallel efforts and ensure the continued integrity of the political process and an inclusive and participatory dialogue. At the same time, I wish to underline that individuals and entities, as well as their supporters, who act to undermine peace, stability and security, have been and can be designated for targeted measures pursuant to resolution 2196 (2015).

67. MINUSCA and United Nations partners have developed a comprehensive plan to provide technical, logistical and security support to the Transitional Authorities to conduct the electoral process, which includes a planned constitutional referendum and presidential and legislative elections. I must re-emphasize that the operational tasks are enormous and the logistical challenges are daunting given the challenging

security environment and the continued lack of State authority and public administration in many parts of the country. National ownership and strengthened political will are needed for the timely conduct of the polls, including with regard to the adoption of a revised electoral legal code. I urge all actors in the electoral process, including the Transitional Authorities and the National Electoral Authority, to accelerate the preparations for the holding of free, fair, transparent and inclusive presidential and legislative elections. I wish to thank those partners, including the African Union, the European Union, France and UNDP, which are providing resources for the elections, and urge other international partners to provide additional and timely support to the electoral process, particularly through financing the UNDP multi-donor basket fund for elections.

68. Ending impunity is a key objective and a necessary prerequisite in improving the security situation, advancing the political process and providing justice to the victims of violations. The arrests of perpetrators of crime by, or with the support of, MINUSCA and other international forces will need to be complemented by fair trials and safe and secure detention under humane conditions. I encourage the national authorities to accelerate the adoption of the draft law on the establishment of the national Special Criminal Court that is in line with international standards. It will also be vital for regional and international partners to provide financial and other support to assist the Transitional Authorities in establishing and operationalizing the Court. I urge Member States to consider secondment or other arrangements to assist the authorities in appointing internationally-recruited magistrates to serve on the national Special Criminal Court. Consideration will also need to be given to the protection of magistrates working on these cases, as well as victims and witnesses. In addition, I encourage the national authorities to develop, through an inclusive and participatory process, a wider strategy to combat impunity and ensure justice for the victims of crimes committed in the Central African Republic in line with broader transitional justice efforts.

69. Alongside efforts to fight impunity and improve the protection of civilians, credible and sustainable alternatives need to be found for those who have taken up arms. Community violence reduction projects in high-risk areas are being initiated and should be expanded to involve unemployed youth and create a conducive environment for reconciliation. At the same time, there is a pressing need to reach agreement on disarmament, demobilization and reintegration and repatriation as part of the political process and to launch a national disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programme. Such an agreement should address the underlying causes of conflict and define peace dividends for relevant parties. In addition, it will be important for the citizens of the Central African Republic to agree on a vision, principles and a strategic approach towards a balanced security sector, including for reformed, inclusive and professional national armed forces and police and gendarmerie, as the foundation for a wider security sector reform process. I welcome, in this regard, the launching of the European Union Military Advisory Mission in the Central African Republic, which will work closely with MINUSCA and other partners.

70. I encourage national stakeholders to find consensus on the way forward in these critical areas in the context of the Bangui Forum, and for regional and international partners to provide the requisite resources in support of implementing these important initiatives. The Bangui Forum should also aim to yield agreement

and national consensus on the individual integration of former combatants on the basis of rigorous eligibility criteria.

71. Widespread and extreme poverty, inequality, political and social exclusion, competition for the illegal exploitation of natural resources, long-standing impunity and a weak State remain the main ingredients of the recurring crises in the Central African Republic. Addressing the root causes of the current crisis requires sustained regional and international support to see through the country's transition and beyond, as well as mutual accountability in order to lead the country towards economic recovery and sustainable development in line with the country's high economic potential. I encourage the Transitional Authorities to promote improved governance and ensure a framework for the international community to continue to provide budget support, while strengthening efforts to build national capacity for improving transparent national public financial management and accountability.

72. I am deeply concerned about the continued dire humanitarian consequences of the ongoing violence, which has resulted in a complex and protracted protection crisis with regional ramifications; 2,700,000 Central Africans require humanitarian assistance, nearly half a million refugees remain in exile in neighbouring countries and minorities continue to be targeted and exposed to extreme violence. While more efforts must be made to promote reconciliation and return, I strongly urge the Transitional Authorities to uphold the Central African Republic's obligations under international human rights law to guarantee the freedom of movement of all populations without discrimination. I am also concerned that humanitarian efforts are being increasingly curtailed by volatile security conditions and direct attacks against humanitarian workers, which prevent assistance from reaching those in most need. Considering the extreme vulnerability of the civilian population, I wish to reiterate the need for timely and sustained support to the humanitarian response plans.

73. MINUSCA has achieved 80 per cent deployment of uniformed personnel and will, by April, achieve its full operating capability. In addition, the security situation and upcoming elections prompted me, in my letter to the President of the Security Council on 29 January, to recommend to the Council to authorize a limited increase of 750 military personnel and 280 police personnel for MINUSCA, in order to enable the deployment of an additional infantry battalion and two formed police units, as well as an additional 20 corrections officers. I welcome the Council's adoption, on 26 March, of resolution 2212 (2015) authorizing these additional capabilities, which will be rapidly deployed in the coming months.

74. In anticipation of the expiry of the initial mandate of MINUSCA on 30 April, it is important to recall the progress that has been achieved in the Central African Republic in the past year. The political process, despite some delays and distractions, is on track and moving forward following a successful national popular consultation process. The security situation, though still volatile, has seen a relative improvement in the year since the deployment of MINUSCA alongside the European Union Force in the Central African Republic and Operation Sangaris. Though significant challenges remain, civilian protection is gradually improving as a result of coordinated and targeted protection efforts. High profile arrests are beginning to make a difference in the massive effort needed to end impunity.

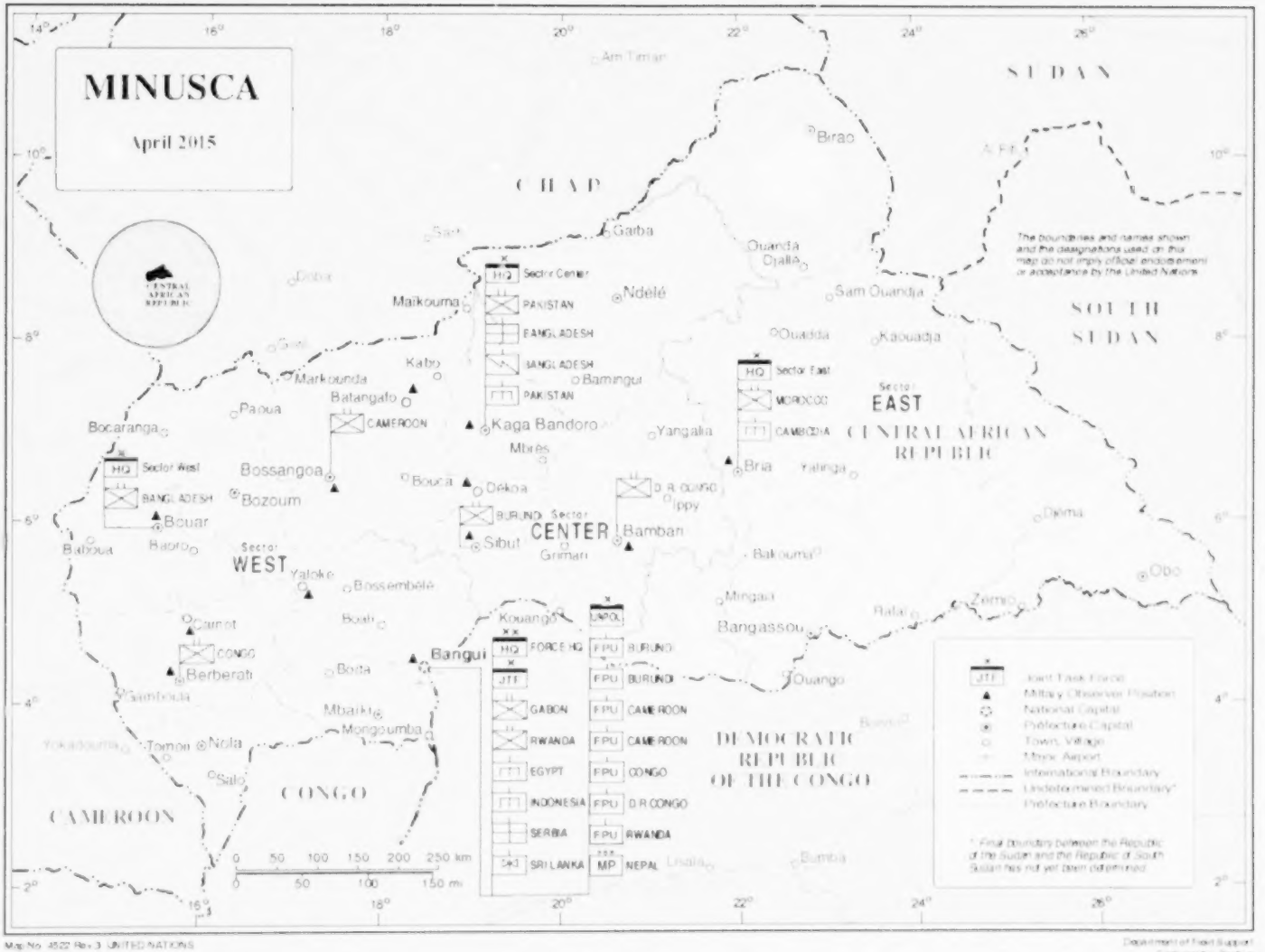
75. In order to sustain and build on these achievements, I recommend an extension of the current mandate of MINUSCA for one year at the authorized level of

10,750 military personnel, including 480 staff officers and military observers, 2,080 police personnel, including 400 individual police officers, and 40 corrections officers. While continuing to prioritize the protection of civilians, I encourage the Security Council to consider requesting MINUSCA to also prioritize the provision of strategic policy advice and coordination of international efforts in the area of security sector reform during the coming period. A renewal of the mandate of MINUSCA in the area of elections will also be vital, and should emphasize the supporting role of the Mission with regard to the provision of technical, operational and logistical support, including creating a conducive security environment; providing good offices and support to the political aspects of the electoral process and monitoring and reporting human rights violations before, during and after the elections; and the lead role of MINUSCA in the coordination of international electoral support to the Transitional Authorities.

76. In the light of the positive contribution that arrests by MINUSCA have made in the fight against impunity, the urgent temporary measures mandate of MINUSCA should also be renewed. In this connection and further to its mandate to support national and international justice and the rule of law, I recommend a distinct mandate to assist the Transitional Authorities, along with other international partners, in the establishment and operationalization of the national Special Criminal Court.

77. I also encourage my Special Representative for the Central African Republic and my Special Representative for Central Africa to continue to work closely to address the threat posed by LRA following the transfer of Dominic Ongwen from the Central African Republic to the International Criminal Court, which will allow for the first international trial of an LRA commander.

78. I am grateful to my Special Representative in the Central African Republic and Head of MINUSCA, Babacar Gaye, for his tireless efforts. I am deeply appreciative of the work being done by the personnel of MINUSCA, the United Nations country team and the humanitarian country team in a dangerous and unpredictable environment. I express my deepest condolences to the countries and families of United Nations staff and humanitarian workers who lost their lives in the line of duty in the Central African Republic. I am grateful to my Special Representative for Central Africa, Abdoulaye Bathily, for his role in the international mediation on the Central African Republic. I also thank the African Union, troop- and police-contributing countries, ECCAS, the European Union, donor countries and multilateral and non-governmental organizations for their continued efforts to bring an end to the suffering of Central Africans.

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